

Fostering Student Motivation: In-Class Practices and Activities

- A survey of graduating students -

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Many teachers would have a difficult time explaining why some students are more motivated than others. Most would agree that the students in their classes that learn the most are usually the one's most motivated. The purpose of this paper is not to make any new discoveries or suggest any new theories in relation to the many different kinds or components of motivation. The purpose of this paper is to explore and discuss how Nagasaki Junior College (NJC) teachers can choose teaching styles and activities that foster student motivation. Teachers need to take a practical and meaningful approach to improving motivation. One way this can be done is by learning which activities and teaching styles motivate their students. Specifically, this paper will look at in-class activities used by English teachers rather than the English Program as a whole. The English program at NJC incorporates many extracurricular activities and special programs in hopes of fostering enjoyment and motivation. Extracurricular activities and special programs will be more closely examined in later research.

First, a short description of the English program at NJC will be discussed. Next, a brief review of traditional and current theories of motivation specific to ESL learners, and with particular relevance to the NJC English program, will be presented. The survey and results will be described in some detail. Finally, areas of improvement and strategies that could be implemented into the NJC program will be suggested.

2. Nagasaki Junior College – English Program

NJC is composed of 3 faculties: English and Tourism, Childcare and Social Welfare Studies and Food and Nutrition. This paper focuses on the English Faculty. The English Program at Nagasaki Junior College is a 2 year associates degree program. Students take a wide variety of courses during their two years. As in most post secondary programs, course credits are accumulated in order to graduate. Many courses are compulsory but there are also a great variety of elective courses available to students. Most course work is concentrated in English language acquisition. However, some courses focus on other areas such as study skills, traditional arts, physical education, preparing for the work force, and computer skills to name a few.

Students participate in 4 semesters of course work. Students take roughly, 8 to 10 subjects or courses per semester or the equivalent of 16 to 20 hours of class per week. Most courses are

composed of fifteen 90-minute classes which are taught once a week. Classes are taught by English faculty teachers, teachers from other faculties or by part-time staff. Most full-time teachers are Japanese but also include one Burmese and one Canadian.

English Conversation courses will be examined more closely as they are the cornerstone of the English curriculum. A goal of the NJC English faculty is to improve student ability and confidence in speaking and communicating in English. For this reason, as a substantial part of students class time and as part of their required course load, students studying English at NJC must successfully complete 3 of 4 English Conversation courses.

English Conversation is 4 separate courses: English Conversation I, English Conversation II, English Conversation III and English Conversation IV. Each course is one semester in length. One significant difference with other courses offered is that English Conversation classes are held daily, Monday through Friday, and are 40 minutes in duration. Each of the four courses has roughly 70 conversation lessons per semester. Based on placement exam scores, students are streamed into 4 or 5 groups (A, B, C, D, and E). All conversation classes are taught by native English speakers. Another significant difference is that each Conversation course is subdivided into three 23-lesson blocks. At the end of each 23-lesson block, streamed groups rotate to a new Conversation teacher. All English Conversation courses are taught by native English speaking teachers, thus allowing students to be taught by 3 different Native English teachers per semester or up to 6 different native English speaking teachers per scholastic year.

3. Motivation

A clear and simple definition of motivation may be one offered by Mitchell (1982) “motivation becomes those psychological processes that cause arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal-related.”

Many models have been suggested to the role that motivation plays in language acquisition. The Garner Socio- Educational Model is a comprehensive three phase model describes the roles of environmental or social factors, individual learner factors and linguistic or non-linguistic outcome factors involved in L2 learning (Gardner, 1982).

Garner, (1982) in his Socio-Educational Model, describes that intelligence, language aptitude, motivation and situational anxiety are the four factors most influential to second language (L2) learning. Once students are enrolled in the program, it may not be possible for NJC teachers to directly influence intelligence or language aptitude. Thus, focus should be on improving motivation and creating desirable situational anxiety. Gardner (1982) described motivation as having three main elements: effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying and the drive to learn. Desire describes how much the learner wants to become proficient at the target language and affect illustrates the learner’s emotional responses to studying. (Gardner, 1982) As it is difficult to have any control over the students’ drive, teachers effort may be best spent if focused on building desire and nurturing the affective. The question becomes: How can this be done?

Not all people are motivated by the same factors. Furthermore, motivation is often situational. Researchers have described various forms of motivation. Researchers often discuss L2 motivation,

with either the integrative/ instrumental or the intrinsic/extrinsic motivation models. For the purposes of later discussion, integrative, instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will be described briefly.

Integrative motivation refers to learner motivation based on an admiration of the target language society and/or a strong desire to adopt some aspect of, or integrate into a society that uses the target language (Gardner and Lambert, 1959). Instrumental Motivation refers to learner motivation based on a desire to acquire something tangible from studying a second language (Hudson, 2000) In this type of motivation, learners are motivated to get a good grade on a test, a university degree or higher social status to name a few possible examples.

However, Benson (1991) noted in a survey of Freshman Japanese students that their motivation to learn English did not fit in either instrumental or integrative and thus created a new category which he named “personal. He noted that the Japanese freshman in his survey were motivated by a “the pleasure” associated with “being able to read English and the enjoyment of entertainment in English

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are somewhat related to Integrative and Instrumental motivation. Someone who is intrinsically motivated learns because of the personal satisfaction gained through the learning process. An extrinsically motivated person is motivated by some external reward or punishment such as test score or receiving praise from a teacher or friend.

Some researchers claim that some forms of motivation are better predictors of learner proficiency and satisfaction than others (Ellis, 1997). While others, claim that separating various forms of motivation is futile because they work in unison (Brown, 2000). Regardless, as motivation is clearly an important factor in learning, teachers should strive to positively influence student motivation in every way possible.

4. The Survey

Upon finishing the last semester of study, 24 students were asked to complete an anonymous survey. (See appendix A) The survey consisted of 2 sections. In section 1, students were asked to rank 25 in-class activities. They were asked to rank each based on how much they felt the activity motivated them to learn or improve their English. (1 = not at all, 5 = completely, x = unsure or does not apply). In section 2, students were asked to rank the top 3 courses that motivated them to learn English and give a brief explanation.

Most items in section 1 are commonly used activities in most ESL classrooms. However, others may not be self-evident and will be briefly described.

Item 8, “passing the next level of Eiken,” refers to a level based English proficiency exam often used in Japan. This test level is often used by Japanese companies when hiring new staff or when giving promotions.

Item 12, “getting 700 points on the TOEIC test” refers a points-based English proficiency exam often used in Japan. Any student that achieves 700 points or more during their 2 years at NJC will be awarded a ¥200 000 scholarship. Also, TOEIC test scores are often used by Japanese companies when hiring new staff or when giving promotions.

Item 13 and 14 refer to an English Conversation IV project. Students studied two episodes of the American sitcom "Friends." They then practiced and performed various scenes. Finally, a video was made and was viewed by all the students.

Item 16, reader's theater, refers to an activity where students practice a story. Each person has a role in the story. They then read the story in front of an audience.

Item 19, making "E-presentation video" refers to an extensive class project. Students were given the task of making a promotional video. They needed to plan, organize, script, practice, and perform each component of the video. They also needed to do their own editing of video and other content.

Item 20, making radio broadcast, refers to an activity used in a 2nd year elective course. In this activity, students were given the task of creating a 5 minute live radio broadcast.

Item 23, English Conversation Oral Exam, refers to an oral exam given to students at the end of each semester. Students are paired at random, usually with someone of similar language ability. They are then given a topic and have a 3 minute conversation based on that topic. Two teachers observe the conversation and then give a score based on pre-described performance standards table.

Item 24, Business English Pasania Restaurant, refers to a class project done in a Business English course. In this class project students were given the task of translating the cafeteria menu. They then studied dialogue commonly used by restaurant staff and patrons. They then needed to determine the roles necessary for a restaurant to function. Each student needed to be assigned a role. Finally, students opened a restaurant, for a day, in their classrooms, using foods prepared in the cafeteria. Their peers and teachers were customers.

5. Survey Results – Section One

	Items	1	2	3	4	5	R
1	Using classroom textbooks	12.5	16.7	33.3	16.7	20.8	24
2	Writing in a journal	12.5	4.2	16.7	25	41.7	24
3	Presenting in front of your peers	18.2	4.5	18.2	13.6	45.5	22
4	Presenting in front of your Japanese Teachers	15	5	35	20	25	20
5	Presenting in front of your Native English Teachers	4.8	4.8	19.1	28.6	42.9	21
6	Writing reports in Japanese	27.8	16.7	38.9	11.1	5.6	18
7	Writing reports in English	8.3	0	8.3	33.3	50	24
8	Passing the next level of Eiken	0	0	13.6	31.8	54.5	22
9	Working alone	4.3	4.3	34.8	17.4	39.1	23
10	Working with a partner	8.3	8.3	25	20.8	37.5	24
11	Working in a group (more than 2 people)	8.7	4.3	17.4	17.4	52.2	23
12	Getting 700 points on the TOEIC test	23.5	0	35.3	17.6	23.5	17
13	Studying "Friends"	13.6	4.5	9.1	36.4	36.4	22
14	Making the "Friend" Video	14.3	0	19.1	19.1	47.6	21
15	Studying English Movies	9.1	0	9.1	31.8	50	22
16	Reader's Theater	30	10	30	20	10	10
17	Making Power Point Presentations	11.1	0	50	22.2	16.7	18
18	Making Poster Presentations	22.2	11.1	27.8	11.1	27.8	18
19	Making "E-Presentation video" about NJC	30.8	15.4	7.7	30.8	15.4	13
20	Making "Radio Broadcast"	20	15.3	40	6.7	20	15
21	Video taping and watching yourself	21.1	5.3	31.6	21.1	21.1	19
22	English Conversation Textbook exams	8.7	8.7	30.4	26.1	26.1	23
23	English Conversation Oral Exam	9.1	4.5	9.1	27.3	50	22
24	Business English "Pasania Restaurant"	14.3	10.5	26.3	21.5	26.3	19
25	Passing Final Exams	8.7	4.3	26.1	26.1	34.8	23
	Overall Percentage of students which gave the following score	14.3	6.3	25.5	22.1	32.8	

R = number of student respondents

Table 1. Percentage of respondents who ranked each item based how highly they felt each item motivated them to learn English

Rather than looking specifically at all items in the survey, attention will be paid to those items that were viewed by students to be either highly motivating or not motivating. It must be noted

that not all items were applicable to all students. It is assumed that if students did not find an item applicable to them, they were asked to mark the x column. Thus to make the results easier to evaluate, all students' scores were made into a percentage score based on the number of students who ranked each item. Please see table 1.

It is assumed that using a 5 point scale allows those surveyed to choose if the item in question was positively motivating (score of 4 or 5), neutral (score of 3) or negatively motivating (score of 1 or 2).

Twelve of the twenty-five items were reported as being positively motivating, only one was found to be negatively motivating and thirteen were found to be either neutral or a mixture of positive and negative.

First, items that were regarded as positively motivating will be examined. Item 8, passing the next level of the EIKAN exam, was ranked highest by those surveyed. 86.3 % of students surveyed ranked this item as a 4 or 5. Furthermore, more than half of all surveyed (54.5%) ranked this item with a score of 5 and zero students gave this item a negative score. Next, for item 7, writing reports in English, of those surveyed 83.3% of students scored a 4 or 5 and exactly half giving the highest score of 5. Following item 7 was item 15, studying movies in English, where 81.8% of students ranked 4 or 5 and also in this case 50% of students giving it the highest score and only 9.1% of students marked this item negatively. Another item that was viewed as positively motivating was item 23, English Conversation Oral Exam. 77.3% reported a score of 4 or 5 and 50% of all respondents gave it the highest score. As can be seen in item 5, presenting in front of your native English speaking teachers, 71% of students gave a score of 4 or 5 with only 9.6 of students reporting a 1 or 2. Next, item 11, working in a group of more than 2 people, was ranked as 4 or 5 by 69.6% of students with only 13% rating with a negative score of 1 or 2. Following, item 2, writing in a journal, resulted in 66.7% scoring a 4 or 5 and only 16.7% of student reporting a negative score. Next, item 14, making the "Friends" video was ranked by 66.7% of respondents as a 4 or 5 with only 14.3% as a score of 1. Of the remaining items found to be scored positively are items 3, 24, 10 and 9. Presenting in front of your peers, Business English "Pasania Restaurant" , working with a partner and working alone scored a 4 or 5 by 60.9% , 59.1% , 58.3% and 56.5 % or students surveyed.

The only item not to be viewed as motivating was item 6: writing reports in Japanese. Of those surveyed, 44.5% reported a score of 1 or 2 and only 16.7% gave it a positive score.

Overall, 54.9% of all items were scored a 4 or 5, 25.5% received a neutral score and 20.6% a negative score.

6. The Results – Section 2

Course	Rank	# 1	# 2	# 3	Total
English Conversation		13	5	1	19
Listening		3	3	1	7
Business English		4	1	1	6
Writing		3		2	5
E - Presentation		1	2		3

Table 2. Student self-report of which courses motivated the most to learn English

Throughout the 2 year program and over 4 semesters of study, students on average complete between 31 and 40 courses. It should also be mentioned that not all courses are English language courses. Some courses are designed to aid students' transition to the work force. Other courses are geared towards leisure activities and others are intended to expose students to traditional cultural arts such as Tea Ceremony, Calligraphy and Paper Folding. In section 2 of the survey, students were asked to rate, in rank order, which 3 courses motivated the most to learn or study English. Also, they were asked to give a brief explanation of why they felt that way. It was hoped that some insight into which courses the students found motivating and their reasons for their opinion would enable English Faculty staff to further improve the program by fostering student motivation. Not all 24 respondents completed this section. Some respondents did complete the section but only ranked 1 or 2 classes. Others ranked the courses which they felt motivated them the most but did not give their reasons. Some of the responses were in Japanese and were translated into English.

In Table 2, it can be seen that an overwhelming large portion of the students surveyed felt that English Conversation was a course that motivated them to learn or study. In total, eighteen ranked this course (in actuality it is 4 courses: Conversation I – IV) as one of the courses that motivated them the most to learn English. Thirteen students ranked it as 1st, five students as 2nd and 1 student as the 3rd most motivating course. Some of the explanations are as follows. "I want to be able to speak English." "It was difficult because the class was held everyday but it was the best for me to learn English. It was better than learning from Japanese teachers." "Class was everyday but classes were shorter. My English ability improved because we learned a little everyday. It was difficult to understand the Native English teachers and respond quickly but the games were fun." "It was good because I started to think, talk and listen in English. That was good." "Teachers were friendly, easy to talk too. It was a good experience and a good way to learn." "This class had Native English teachers, not Japanese teachers. Classes were taught all in English so it was a good way to learn, a good way for me." "We can practice our English skill at the class with English teacher everyday it was very hard to us because everyday we have to come to class on time." "Class was everyday. We actually talked and class was fun." "Listening to Native English teachers everyday." "To tell you the truth, it was hard to come to school in the morning but I enjoyed the class. And I could learn about slang and cultures. Teachers are so nice." "Contact with, the ability to communicate with Native English speakers/teachers." "Having class everyday

helped me to improve my ability and at the end, I was no longer nervous speaking in front of people". "I enjoyed Friends." "Because we practiced pronunciation, did shadowing and practiced in front of people." "Learning in English Conversation class was fun." "Because I could talk to Native English Speakers. I learned natural English from them." "I can talk with native speakers everyday and enjoy this class." "Active English."

Next, 7 students ranked "Listening" as one of the 3 classes that motivated them the most to learn. It should be noted, of the 5 most reported courses, this is the only course taught by a Japanese professor. Three students ranked it 1st, three the 2nd class and 1 as 3rd. Student's reasons this course motivated them are as follows. "Listening practice was good. It was helpful for understanding in English Conversation class. My listening improved." "In this class, we watched movies and did dictation which was helpful in improving my listening." "I felt that I progressed. I got used to listening and I improved." "While watching the movie, I learned conversation and useful expressions." "This class motivated me because I could study English through movies." "I was not good at listening prior to this class but this class helped me to improve." "My listening skills improved."

The next most reported course, with 6 respondents ranking it in the top three was Business English." Four students ranked it as 1st, one as 2nd and one as 3rd. The reasons given were as follows. "I feel that I am using more useful English, real-world English." "It's different from ordinary English. It was good for me because it was English I could use in the business world." "We learned basic and useful sentences for business and practiced them." "I used practical English that I can use in an airport or restaurant."

Next, Writing was ranked in the top three by 5 students. Three students ranked it as the class that motivated them the most and 2 ranked it as the 3rd most motivating course. Some of the reasons given were as follows. "Writing and thinking in English is very tedious and takes a lot of time but teacher feedback was really helpful." "Writing in a journal is a very good way to learn." "I liked to write a journal. When I wrote wrong English, my teacher corrected them." "My writing improved because I had to keep a journal."

It may also be insightful to see some of the comments written about other courses students found motivating. One student commented that Eikan class helped him/her prepare for the Eikan exam. Another student reported that Culture Studies helped motivate her/him because "I can watch the movies and learn about many kind of English."

7. Discussion

The purpose of this research is to discover which subjects/courses and which in class activities students reported as being highly motivating and those which were not. Teachers could use the information gathered here to aid them in selecting in-class activities, and teaching styles and/or other possible methods to help increase student motivation.

Passing the next level of the Eiken test may be important for students in many ways. First, a higher Eiken level may result in more job opportunities available to them. Second, it may be seen as something tangible, or something attainable. Thus, offering more courses that aid students attain

some kind of certificate or qualification may foster motivation. Third, L2 students often report that they can not see their progress and that makes them lose motivation. Passing the next level may motivate them because it allows them to see their progress in some way. Allowing students to see progress in their studies is also important and will be discussed in correlation with other findings.

Many students mentioned that writing reports and writing a journal motivated them. This comes to a bit of a surprise as writing assignments are often met with outward discontent. Students often commented that writing takes too much time and is too difficult but that getting direct and individual feedback helped them to improve. Perhaps the combination of a challenging activity, with the feedback necessary to improve resulted in students being motivated to learn. Another possibility may be some students' desire for positive feedback from their teacher. One student wrote in a journal that he worked so hard on his journal was because he always looked forward to reading the teacher's comments. This may show that some students are hungry for or enjoy teacher feedback. Thus, giving feedback to students about their learning is also important and needs to be looked at further.

Students also mentioned that they were motivated to learn by watching movies, TV shows or other activities that helped them to learn "real-world English", "practical English" or "useful expressions". Teachers may try to use media to demonstrate to students, in a fun way, how the English language is used by English speakers and in turn motivate them to learn. This may be of particular interest based on the research done by Benson (1991) which showed that a reason that many Japanese students study English is for the enjoyment of English Entertainment. It would then be only logical to incorporate activities in which students are interested, such as watching movies, watching popular television programs or listening to popular music to increase their motivation. To add, doing so may also be fostering the integrative motivation described earlier.

Oddly enough, students reported that working alone, with a partner and in a group all aided their motivation. In this case, the best course of action would be for teachers to vary their teaching styles and classroom activities throughout the semester so that each student has the opportunity to work individually, in a pair and in a group.

In conclusion, of all the English courses at NJC, English Conversation may have been reported as motivating students the most because of several factors. It is taught everyday, it is taught by native English teachers, it teaches realistic, everyday language, it is relevant to the students and it helps them see improvement over time. Also, as English Conversation class sizes are generally smaller than other courses, it may provide an opportunity for more teacher – student interaction and more opportunity for teachers to give individualized, specific, feedback to students.

It should be conceded that it is not possible or practical for all course to be taught everyday, and by native English speakers. However, if teachers should make it a priority to vary their teaching styles and the kind of activities they use, this may improve student motivation. Furthermore, it has been seen the role teacher feedback can play in motivating students. Teachers should strive to give each student some direct and specific feedback regarding what they can do to be successful. This is a very important component in motivating students. Teachers should make every effort to use evaluation methods and strategies that give more specific and individualized

feedback to students. There are countless ways that this can be done. It is up to each teacher to first make this a priority and then find a way to do it.

Also, students seem to want to see progress. Learning a 2nd language often takes many years of concentrated study and sometimes students may not feel as they are progressing. This may sap their motivation. Teachers should do their best to demonstrate to students in a tangible way what they have learned. For example having students keep a vocabulary log of new words they have learned throughout a semester or keeping a binder of all the work they have done may show them how much they have accomplished or learned during a certain period. This may be another reason students reported that keeping a journal helped motivate them. At the end of the semester, they had a record of what they had done and learned. Another possibility would be for students to take English proficiency exams on a regular basis. If the test results were shared with them, this would allow them to see their progress. The best kind of English proficiency test is one that gives a specific, meaningful breakdown of abilities such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension grammar, vocabulary, etc.

In regards to those items that scored as neither positive nor negative, teachers need to decide whether or not to stop using certain activities if they do not motivate students. Another option would be for teachers to adapt these activities in ways that may increase motivation.

Not only classroom teachers have an influence on classroom motivation. School administration could also play an important role. First, it may be advisable for administration to consider limiting class sizes to foster more direct teacher student interaction. This may force school management to hire additional teachers at additional cost to the school. Next, whenever possible, management should hire, qualified native English teachers to teach courses because students themselves have said that this increased their motivation to learn.

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長崎短期大学研究紀要 第 21 号

Nagasaki Junior College – Motivation Survey

長崎短大での動機付け調査(何が英語を勉強したいという気持ちにさせるか)

Everyone is motivated to learn in different ways.

NJC is conducting research to see what motivates students to learn

みなさんは、様々な理由が動機になり英語を学んでいます。そこで、どのような動機付けを持って英語を勉強しているかを調査します。

Part 1:

Please rank how much the following motivates you to improve or learn English

英語がうまくなったり、勉強するために、何がどのくらいいい動機付けになったか答えてください。

1= not at all 5 = Completely x = unsure or does not apply

1= まったく動機付けにならなかった。～ 5= 絶対になった。X= わからない、この質問はあてはまらない。

- _____ Using classroom textbooks 教科書を使うこと
- _____ Writing in a journal ジャーナルを書くこと
- _____ Presenting in front of your peers 友達の前で発表すること
- _____ Presenting in front of your Japanese Teachers 日本人の先生の前で発表すること
- _____ Presenting in front of your Native English Teachers 外国人教師の前で発表すること
- _____ Writing reports in Japanese 日本語でレポートを書くこと
- _____ Writing reports in English 英語でレポートを書くこと
- _____ Passing the next level of Eiken 英検に合格すること
- _____ Working alone 自分で勉強すること
- _____ Working with a partner 友達(パートナー)と勉強すること
- _____ Working in a group (more than 2 people) グループ(二人以上)で勉強すること
- _____ Getting 700 points on the TOEIC test トーイックで700点取ること
- _____ Studying "Friends" 「フレンズ」を勉強すること
- _____ Making the "Friend" Video 「フレンズ」の映画を作ること
- _____ Studying English Movies 英語の映画を勉強すること
- _____ Reader's Theater リーダーズシアター
- _____ Making PowerPoint Presentations パワーポイントのプレゼンを作ること
- _____ Making Poster Presentations 掲示ポスターを作ること
- _____ Making "E-Presentation video" about NJC 長崎短大に関する「Eプレゼンテーション」のビデオを撮ること
- _____ Making "Radio Broadcast" 「ラジオ放送」を作ること
- _____ Video taping and watching yourself ビデオで撮り、自分を後で見る
- _____ English Conversation Textbook exams 英会話教科書のテスト
- _____ English Conversation Oral Exam 英会話の面接試験
- _____ Business English "Pasania Restaurant" ビジネス英語での「パサニアレストラン」
- _____ Passing Final Exams 期末テストで良い点数(パスすること)

Part 2:

Of all your courses at NJC, which 3 classes motivated you the most to learn English.

Please give a brief explanation

英語系の授業でどの科目が英語を勉強したいと思わせる科目でしたか？3科目をあげ、簡単に説明しなさい。

- 1 Course (科目) _____
Explanation (説明) _____

- 2 Course _____
Explanation _____

- 3 Course _____
Explanation _____

Appendix A